

Native Americans

Debby Tewa

This is the summary of the presentation given at the Village Power conference that was held in Washington, DC. The summary contains my experience primarily with the NativeSUN program. Although I am no longer employed by the Hopi Foundation, I continue to work with Native peoples in the United States on renewables and collaborate with NativeSUN on some projects.

NativeSUN is a project of the Hopi Foundation, a 501(c) 3 nonprofit corporation.

NativeSUN works to find a balance between the old and new.

NativeSUN is located on the Hopi Reservation in northeastern Arizona, with an Alternative Energy Center and offices in the Village of Kykotsmovi.

Thousands of people living in isolated locations have no electricity.

NativeSUN provides electrical power to those who have none. The objective is to increase the awareness of communities about renewable technologies locally, nationally, and internationally and demonstrate the ability to sustain an ecologically healthy environment for future generations.

NativeSUN has installed about 300 systems, including some upgrades of previously existing systems at traditional housing in the Hopi villages and at rural Navajo residences. NativeSUN sponsored training with Ecuadorian natives to install photovoltaic systems and a demonstration installation at Pueblo of Zuni at Zuni, New Mexico.

NativeSUN's Energy Center serves as the principal site for business activities and our energy education program. This is a working solar electric power site. The center is used to train people on how to implement and maintain systems and to transfer technical knowledge. The solar components installed in the facility makes it easy to demonstrate to visitors, customers and students how a solar electric facility works and operates. We hold hands-on demonstration on the environment and ecology using graphic processes and work with the school to educate the next generation.

In keeping with the Hopi Foundation's goal to encourage self-sufficiency, NativeSUN has established a revolving loan program, so that homeowners can purchase their own systems. The loans are paid back at low rates over a reasonable time, making electricity affordable. Considerable time is spent with potential consumers before the consummation of a loan. Over one hundred families have received loans under the revolving loan fund.

Hopi ceremonies are performed for the Hopi people, and are also performed for the world. The Hopi approach is holistic, a vision for the world. We sustain things for the people. Everything is connected. For thousands of years the Hopi people have lived in a demanding ecological relationship with a desert environment. Today facing an escalating global environmental crisis the world community has become acutely aware of the limits and depletion of nonrenewable natural resources.